

## Policy Area 8: **Attractive Community Appearance**



### Key Words and Phrases:

Citizen Comments from Town Meeting (literal, unedited):

### DESIRED FUTURE

#### Community Appearance, Generally

- Preserve community appearance-through implementation of code enforcement & legislation of municipal codes & ordinances
- Ordinance that does not allow abandoned buildings
- Higher minimum requirements for new construction landscaping

#### Community Appearance, Tree Planting and Preservation

- Preserve trees by preventing clear cutting of lots
- Look of neighborhood-trees, grassy areas
- Line the streets with trees
- Restrictions on taking down trees

#### Community Appearance, Underground Utilities

- Mandated underground power lines

#### Community Appearance, Entryway Corridors

- Develop scenic corridors along major highways
- Welcome to SFD signs
- New welcome signs on side of road for Summerfield
- Beautify entrances to town – flowers, signage

## UNWANTED FUTURE

### Unkempt Homes and Yards

- Littered (unkempt) homes
- Junk littering Summerfield Rd

### Bright Lights

- Excessive lighting
- Bright lights
- Anything that increases sky lights-light pollution

### Town Council/Zoning Board Comments From Joint Kick Off Meeting:

#### Appearance

- Signage/billboard standards

#### Prepare for Plan Implementation and Possible Ordinance Changes

- Successful implementation of new Comp Plan and required ordinance changes
- Are our ordinances still effective?
- Ordinances that are flexible to react to changing economic environments

The preceding *key words and phrases* were gleaned from (1) the Town Meeting for the Comprehensive Plan and (2) the Joint Kick-Off Meeting of the Town Council and Zoning Board. These key words and phrases were employed to generate the following **Common Objective** and related **Policies for Community Appearance**.



### Common Objective for Attractive Community Appearance

Community appearance can create a positive town image and sets the tone for all development to follow. An attractive community enhances the quality of life of town residents, and attracts visitors and businesses to the area that share the same values of quality and sustainability. Community appearance deals largely with what can be seen from the public roadway. Appearance issues deserving of public policy and action include exterior lighting, junked vehicles, preservation of tree cover, the presence or absence of street trees, the appearance of public and private signage, streetscape conditions, parking lot landscaping, architectural design and building form, public and private outdoor displays, the presence or absence of overhead wires, the design and location of communication towers, and the way in which local development practices seek to preserve the natural features of land.

### Policies for Attractive Community Appearance

**Policy 8.1: EXTERIOR LIGHTING** should be attractive, functional, and safety conscious, and shall be designed and shielded to avoid negative impacts on the night sky visibility of Summerfield.

**Policy 8.2: LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS AT EXISTING AND NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENTS**, particularly as related to breaking up and softening the appearance of expansive parking areas, shall be encouraged.

**Policy 8.3: UTILITIES** should be placed underground in all new residential and non-residential developments. Individual and other smaller scale developments along a road where overhead utilities are the norm may be exempted from this requirement until such time as overhead to underground conversion is to be completed over the larger area involved.

**Policy 8.4:** While **WIRELESS SERVICE** technology should be facilitated as a significant benefit to the town and its residents, Town approval of necessary **TOWERS** (or existing structures retrofitted for same) shall take the public health, safety, and welfare of area residents, as well as the visual quality of the town landscape into consideration.

**Policy 8.5: DESIGN STANDARDS** should be employed so that development and redevelopment is consistent with the architectural context, community character, economic attractiveness, and livability of Summerfield. (Also see Policy Area 3: Community Character Preservation, for policies concerning tree preservation.)

**Policy 8.6:** The important economic and community image benefits of attractive **MAJOR TRAVEL CORRIDORS** through the town shall be recognized. Such entryway corridors shall receive priority attention for improved appearance and development standards, including screening, landscaping, signage, tree preservation, and underground utilities.

**Policy 8.7: PARKING AREAS** adjoining major roads should be generally screened from view using appropriate design elements, topographic features, and/or plantings. Plants should be tall enough at maturity to obscure views of parked cars without jeopardizing traffic safety. Service, loading, and trash dumpster areas should be completely screened.

**Policy 8.8: SPECIAL ROADWAY OVERLAY ZONING** should be employed to help implement roadway corridor plans, particularly with regard to development standards for buildings, signage, and parking areas within sight of the roadway.

**Policy 8.9:** Proper code enforcement shall be employed to deal with the public health, safety, and appearance issues of **ABANDONED AND NEGLECTED PROPERTIES**, as well as general trash and debris.

**Policy 8.10: BILLBOARDS** shall be prohibited throughout the Town of Summerfield.

**Policy 8.11: UNLICENSED VEHICLES** shall not be permitted to remain in locations visible from any public right of way, except as may be specifically permitted within an approved junkyard. Unlicensed farm vehicles, parked on farm property, should be exempt from this policy.

*Properly placing trees in new construction (should be) as much a part of the cost of buildings as pouring concrete and putting in sewers.*

**Gary Moll**  
1989

*It costs about one cent to reduce peak-load energy demands one kilowatt-hour by planting trees, whereas savings from improving the efficiency of appliances would cost about 2.5 cents and improving electrical supply energy would cost 10 cents.*

**Sara Ebenreck**  
1989  
Citing research by the Lawrence Berkley Lab

## Notes and Commentary:

### *Special Highway Travel Corridors*

Public attitudes about community appearance, as expressed during the first town meeting held for the Comprehensive Plan, showed good support for maintaining and improving appearances, particularly along the town's major roadways. State enabling legislation allows local governments in North Carolina to establish special controls and incentives for development along special highways of the community's choosing. In the case of Summerfield, those highways deserving of special treatment include, particularly, US 220, NC 150, Old Summerfield Road, and the planned Interstate 73 connector.



In this regard, a Scenic Corridor Overlay District has been created within the Town of Summerfield Development Ordinance. The Overlay District applies to two highway corridors, each encompassing fifteen hundred (1,500) feet on either side of the centerlines of US 220 and NC 150. Special development standards included in the two overlay areas include controls over the placement of additional manufactured homes, screening of outdoor storage and activities, requirements for non-residential building materials and building design, and standards for signage, fences, and landscaped parking areas.

This plan recommends that the future I-73 Connector also receive protection through the application of a Scenic Corridor Overlay District II. This new overlay district will be required due to the limited access nature of the interstate, high traffic speeds, potential noise issues, and other characteristics that will make it quite different than either US 220 or NC 150. Specifically, the Town should consider requiring a naturalized buffer of trees and other vegetation adjoining both sides of the right of way for a distance of about 100 feet. The buffer would be designed to help protect properties near the interstate from the likely noise, air, and light pollution associated with this major new roadway. It would also help preserve the rural character of Summerfield for visitors passing through and provide a desirable image to prospective future residents and business owners

### *Commercial Development Standards Generally*

In addition to implementing scenic highway controls only along specially designated highways in Summerfield, the Town may wish to revisit its general development standards that apply to non-residential development anywhere in the community. Such general standards might include building design, parking lot location, landscaping, signage, and other features.

Committee members noted that a few commercial buildings in the town need to improve their overall appearance, largely in the area of upkeep. While North Carolina state enabling legislation limits the degree to which local governments can control building architecture (appearance not structure), other communities have found incentive based awards and community service programs to be effective in encouraging property owners to keep up their premises.